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THE BIBLICAL WORLD

CONTINUING

The Old and New Testament Student

VOLUME V.

FEBRUARY, 1895

NUMBER 2

THE
RELATION OF
EVENT TO
RECORD

THE distinction between an event in history and the record of that event is clearly self-evident, and yet we are inclined, in many instances, to ignore it. Statements in the record which, from an external point of view, may have only an indirect connection with the events often lose this connection in common use and are given a meaning which the earlier situation would not have allowed. The event itself which furnishes the basis for the statement in the record, if it is not minutely described, is soon forgotten; while the statements are, after a while, given a prominence they were never intended to possess. So important a position is assigned to the record that frequently we forget that there could have been no record if the event had not taken place. We may cite two very familiar examples. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was an event intended in the divine plan to represent certain fundamental truths in Christianity. As a matter of fact that resurrection formed the basis of certain possibilities in the case of each man who professes a faith in the Christ. If the account of the resurrection had been handed down by tradition without written form, and even if there had been varying traditions contradicting each other in details, would the event as a part of the divine plan have been any the less significant? Would these possibilities in the case of believers have been ruled out? It may be asserted, therefore, that without any

written record the fact of the resurrection would have accomplished the same results, so far as without a written record the spread of Christianity could have been brought about. Again, not one in a hundred who reads the ninth chapter of Isaiah realizes the important historical event but for which this sermon of Isaiah would never have been preached. It was in connection with the invasion of Damascus and of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. At this time when these tribes are suffering dishonor, the prophet speaks of a period in the future when *they* will be the first to be honored. In a time of greatest darkness he preaches of light. In a time of deepest sorrow he preaches of a joy which can only be compared to that of those who distribute the booty. When the yoke of the oppressor has been placed upon a portion of the chosen people, he preaches of the breaking of that yoke. When war with all its terrors and horrors is upon them, he preaches of the destruction of all warlike implements. In contrast with Tiglath-pileser, the tyrant, he preaches of the Prince of Peace. We see, therefore, that this most magnificent Messianic passage is dependent for the time of its utterance, the form of its expression, and the essence of its meaning upon the invasion of the Assyrian king. Shall we think only of the words of the sermon and neglect to consider the striking event in Israelitish history with which the production stands thus closely connected? It must be clear that for any proper understanding of the record there must be an understanding of the event which lies back of the record; and, still further, that any supernatural or divine characteristic attributed to the record must be a characteristic also of the historical event out of which the record grew.

THIS brings us face to face with a question concerning Israel's history. Is this history in any sense peculiar? If not, how can the record be regarded as peculiar? If the plan of

**THE QUESTION
OF UNIQUE
ORIGIN** God for the deliverance of men included, in its working out, great and important events in the history of a particular people, does this not give to these events a unique character? If the Psalms and prophecies were the outgrowth of individual experience and national

experience, are we not most of all indebted to these experiences, and do not these experiences stand by themselves, apart from other individual and national experiences? Granting that the Holy Scriptures have had in a peculiar sense a divine origin, can we logically deny this same origin to the events which formed the very fabric of the record? Logically this seems to follow, but it is only fair to ask whether any evidence exists that this is true. But where may we expect to find such evidence? In answer it may be said, in the facts narrated; provided, of course, we are sure that they are facts; in the testimony of the writers, provided, of course, we are willing to accept the credibility of this testimony; in a comparison of Israelitish institutions with the institutions of other nations; in the present condition of the Jewish nation; and in the influences which have been wrought out as a result of the occurrence of these events. It is possible only to make the merest suggestion of the arguments which deserve consideration.

THE facts of Israelitish history, including those also of the first century of the Christian era, when collected and classified, furnish a group which is paralleled by no other group of facts in the world's history. With the call of Abraham, the life in Egypt, the work of Moses, Samuel and David; with the futile struggle for independent existence of northern and southern kingdoms—times which produced such men as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel; with the foreign captivities and the return from the great captivity; with the continued struggle, religious and political, through the Greek and Syrian periods; with the coming of the Christ and the events of his ministry; with the conversion of Paul and the results of his preaching; with all its strange and miraculous events which were ordered at the most critical periods in this long cycle of twenty centuries; with its unity and consistency from beginning to end as seen in the gradual growth and development of ideas, and in the prophetic declarations and in the fulfillment of prophecy; with an idealism which fairly staggers even our own generation because of its sublimity and lofty character; brought

*THE FACTS
OF ISRAELITISH
HISTORY*

into close contact at different times with all the great civilizations of antiquity, Ancient Babylonian, Hittite, Egyptian, Phœnician, Syrian, Assyrian, Later Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman; shaped to some extent by all, yet maintaining its independence of all—these facts and this history are so unique, have such significance, sustain so peculiar a relation to all other history, stand so apart, reveal so clearly a divine plan, that the student of history fails to find any adequate explanation unless he accepts the proposition that this history was divinely ordered in a sense in which no other history was so ordered.

THAT Israelitish history is unique; that a nation was especially chosen by God from all the nations of the earth to do a work which should bless all the families of the earth;

THE VALUE OF ISRAELITISH TESTIMONY that "when the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the children of men, he set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel;" that Israel was especially guided in every step of national history; that Jehovah compassed him about, instructed him, kept him as the apple of his eye; that disaster was the direct messenger of the God of all the earth to warn or punish his people; that prosperity was in the strictest sense the result of obedience to the divine command; that the neighboring nations were instruments in the hands of God for training Israel; that Israel was the son of God, one in whose tutelage God, the father, took special interest; that Israel was the spouse of God, his only wife; that Jehovah, not a national deity, but the creator of all the earth, the God of all the nations, was his guide, his rock and his redemer; that Israel's God was on close and intimate terms with Israel's leaders; that he gave specific direction as to events of political as well as religious character; that Israel's legislation came direct from heaven; that Israel's prophets spoke the exact word of God—all this, poets, prophets and sages declare repeatedly and emphatically. If these things are not true, Israel's poets, prophets and sages were self-deceived, or gross deceivers. If a tenth part of this testimony is accepted, the doctrine of the divinely ordered

Israelitish history is established. Is the testimony consistent with evidence which may be gathered outside of the records? Does an examination of contemporaneous records from Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece and Rome confirm this testimony? The answer cannot be questioned. The more we learn of these ancient records, the more confirmed are we as to the reliability of the testimony of Scripture narratives. If Scripture testimony is consistent with itself and with the facts, and if outside testimony corroborates it, the case is settled.

ISRAELITISH life includes many institutions. The life, as a matter of fact, was largely controlled by these institutions; they formed, at all events, an integral part of the life, and as such are of special value in this connection. If we could believe as formerly that such institutions as the Sabbath and circumcision were peculiar to the Israelites, this might constitute an argument for their divine origin, and consequently for the supernatural character of Israelitish history. But we now know that these and other institutions were the common property of many nations. In not a few cases there is historical evidence of their existence centuries before the time of Abraham. Does this, then, go to prove the opposite of the proposition for which we are contending? By no means. The institution of sacrifice is most common among all ancient nations. There are many resemblances between the observances of the institution among the Hebrews and other ancient nations, and these go to prove a common origin. But when we make comparison, we find that dissimilarities in form and spirit and purpose exist, greater by far than any similarities. The same is true of circumcision, and of other institutions which might be mentioned. Instead of representing that which was degrading, it came to be the symbol of everything that was uplifting. In the comparison we find differences and similarities so great and of such a character that the only plausible hypothesis to be adopted is that the Israelitish nation, under the peculiar guidance of the Supreme Being, although inheriting these institutions, revealed them in a form

*THE EVIDENCE
FURNISHED BY
ISRAEL'S
INSTITUTIONS
AND TRADITIONS*

purified, modified, and even revolutionized by an influence directly divine. The same result follows a comparison of the pre-Abrahamic traditions of Israel with the corresponding traditions of other nations. Israel, in common with these nations, had its stories of creation, the origin of sin, the beginning of civilization, the long-lived patriarchs, the deluge, the dispersion of nations. As we have shown before, the resemblances of Israel's stories to the other stories are so many and so great as to show a common origin; but the differences are far greater. What does this indicate? A differentiation which could only be the result of a supernatural influence, the same influence which guided the actions of the chosen nation. There are those, to be sure, who magnify the resemblances at the expense of the differences, but any careful examination must, we think, lead to the conclusion that a hand other than human did this work.

THE anomaly of all history is the modern Jew—hated, but feared; persecuted, but respected. “They are as distinct today as when they came out of Egypt or returned from Babylon. Roman, Goth, Spaniard, Italian, Englishman, all in turn, and church or state, separate or combined, have in vain exerted their cruelest ingenuity to extirpate them, or blend them beyond the possibility of recovery with the Gentiles.” “Empires have passed away as a shadow, leaving behind them only their names. They have perished and their places know them no more. But the Jews are still there, standing apart from all other races, as in the days of Jesus Christ, one distinct and unique family in the midst of the confusion of all others—rich, though a thousand times despoiled; increasing in numbers and more united than ever though scattered by a tempest of eighteen centuries to the extremities of the globe.¹

The Jew is at once an enigma and a miracle. What is the key to the enigma? the explanation of the miracle? the facts as recorded in the Old and New Testament. No other testimony is needed to corroborate the truth of these records, the argu-

¹ *The Argument for Christianity*, pp. 237–239.

ment is capable of large expansion and direct application to the question at hand. One thing, at all events, seems clear. If the hand of God has touched in a peculiar way any nation in the progress of the world's history, it is the nation of the Jews.

“By their fruits ye shall know them.” The test was given us long ago in Deuteronomy (18:22): “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him.” The reverse of this is equally true. Submitted to this test, the events of Israelitish history, including the first century of the Christian era, show themselves to be worthy of the place to which we assign them, the place of supremacy, of peculiarity, of uniqueness, such uniqueness as may not be explained by any natural hypothesis. It is true that from the divine point of view, everything is natural, that, therefore, there is no dividing line between natural and supernatural; but it is also true that even from the point of view of God, there are different kinds of the “natural.” The events of Hebrew and Jewish history may not be compared with any others. They stand alone. God acted in them as he acted in no others.

WHY did he select Israel? In order, through Israel, to bring larger life, and larger thought to other nations. Was the divine heart drawn more closely to Israel than to other nations? No; but in order that all humanity might be delivered this plan was adopted. The same method in principle was adopted by Jesus, who selected twelve that through these his truth might be proclaimed abroad. Was he in this act guilty of any favoritism?

The facts of Israelitish history speak for themselves; the method of the divine plan, as we dimly see it, was fundamentally sound; the results far more than justify the procedure. *Israelitish history is in a peculiar sense divine.*